



Value chain school with climate change and gender perspective: Learning and monitoring guide

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International Potato Center

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ISBN: 978-92-9060-526-3

DOI: 10.4160/9789290605263

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Correct citation:

International Potato Center. 2019. Value chain school with climate change and gender perspective: Learning and monitoring guide. Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (APART) project. International Potato Center. 44 p.

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CIP/ Arma Bertuso

July 2019

CIP thanks all donors and organizations which globally support its work through their contributions to the CGIAR Trust Fund. <https://www.cgiar.org/funders/>



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Preface

The International Potato Center (CIP) is committed to support the Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Society (ARIAS) to implement the Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project (APART), funded by Government of Assam, India, and the World Bank. In the framework of this collaboration CIP provides ARIAS and its implementing partners with new methods and approaches to link potato farmers to markets, develop new products, and establish smallholder potato-based enterprises through value chain schools with a focus on encouraging women in small-scale processing.

The value chain school (VCS) is a participatory action learning process that involves farmer groups participating in agricultural value chains. As part of capacity strengthening, VCS comprises a series of group-based experiential learning activities over a production-marketing cycle while interacting with other chain actors and stakeholders. As a tangible outcome of VCS, the farmer-participants are expected to have initiated or strengthened a business upon completing the VCS learning process. VCS aspires to more profitable pro-poor farm business through market-oriented innovations that enhance trust, coordination, and collaboration between farmers and other chain actors while empowering men and women farmers, thus ultimately contributing to sustainable livelihoods of targeted farming households.

The VCS approach strongly builds on the farmer business school (FBS) approach developed by CIP and first introduced in Indonesia. Following its successful application, FBS was then introduced in the Philippines by the CIP - Food Security Through Asian Roots and Tubers (FoodSTART), one of the grant projects of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). More recently, the approach has been scaled out and adapted by several IFAD investments projects in Asia, including FishCORAL and INREMP in the Philippines, SOLID in Indonesia and LAMP in India with support and technical backstopping by the CIP - Food Resilience Through Root and Tuber Crops in Upland and Coastal Communities of the Asia-Pacific (FoodSTART+), a project funded by IFAD and the European Union.

The VCS was implemented in APART project sites in Assam State starting in March 2019. This VCS learning and monitoring guide complements the FBS manual and they are expected to be jointly used as key resources during trainings of VCS facilitators and day-to-day implementation of the schools.

In adopting the VCS approach, it is expected that the capacities of APART staff and partners will be developed as facilitators and enablers for micro-enterprise development by the APART beneficiaries.



Diego Naziri, Value Chain Expert for CIP-APART Enterprises Development module

Acronyms

APART	Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation project
ARIAS	Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Society
BDS	Business development services
BF	Block-level facilitator
BL	Business launch
CF	Community facilitator
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIP	International Potato Center
EU	European Union
FBS	Farmer business school
FishCORAL	Fisheries, Coastal Resources and Livelihood Project
FGD	Focus group discussion
FoodSTART	Food Security Through Asian Roots and Tubers
FoodSTART+	Food Resilience Through Root and Tuber Crops in Upland and Coastal Communities of the Asia-Pacific
GMP	Good manufacturing practice
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INREMP	Integrated Natural Resources and Environmental Management Project
LAMP	Meghalaya Livelihoods and Access to Markets Project
MF	District-level mentor facilitator
RTB	CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas
SOLID	Smallholder Livelihood Development Project in Maluku and North Maluku
SWOC	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges
SVM	Stakeholders' validation meeting
SVW	Stakeholders' validation workshop
TOF	Training of facilitators
VCS	Value chain school
VCS-LMG	Value chain school learning and monitoring guide
VCS-MC	Value chain school monitoring checklist
VCS-MMG	Value chain school monitoring-mentoring guide

What is the VCS learning and monitoring guide?

The **VCS learning and monitoring guide (VCS-LMG)** is primarily meant to guide the VCS facilitators in their weekly sessions, and remind them of the expected outputs for each session. It is not a replacement for the Farmer Business School (FBS) manual that remains a ‘must-read’ for adequate VCS preparation, providing the details of the concepts, principles, and directions to the facilitators. The FBS manual should be read during and after the training of facilitators (TOF-VCS), before VCS implementation, and as preparation for the refresher course. Furthermore, the VCS-LMG guides VCS facilitators and the VCS Core Team of the implementing organization (ARIAS) in identifying and addressing challenges (mentoring) and tracking progress (monitoring) in implementation.

The VCS-LMG is an operational, easy-to-use checklist of activities and outputs that the facilitators can easily refer to during the VCS session. It consists of the following sections:

1. **Implementation and facilitation of VCS:** discusses the basic relationship and importance of intertwined processes: VCS facilitation, monitoring, and mentoring, and describes the different responsibilities of facilitators relative to their respective monitoring and mentoring functions.
2. **Summary of modules:** presents in brief the modules and sessions of the VCS curriculum, and the suggested number of hours or days of engagement with the enterprise group. The module, activities, duration of engagement, and any changes made should always be agreed between the facilitators and the enterprise group.
3. **The modules in brief:** summarizes the learning objectives, suggested activities (with brief description), and expected outputs of each session.
4. **The VCS monitoring-mentoring toolkit:** a key tool to track and enhance VCS implementation. VCS monitoring is done at three levels: by the local enterprise facilitators, i.e. the block and community facilitators; by the APART district-level mentor facilitators; and by the ARIAS VCS Core Team. Local and Mentor facilitators as well as the ARIAS Core Team will have different oversight and monitoring roles and should all use this guide to harmonize VCS status reporting and identify information needs of the group, and the nature and timing of their responses.

While the VCS-LMG is handy during the VCS sessions, the facilitator should always refer to the FBS Manual for the concepts and principles, and to prepare for the exercises. The facilitator, however, can be creative and add relevant exercises related to the session. The add-on(s) should be listed in the ‘exercises’ column of the monitoring checklist; indicating in the ‘remarks’ column that this is an add-on. Evidence of activities and relevant outputs should be part of the materials in the documentation portfolio.

Implementation and Facilitation of VCS

The VCS with climate change and gender perspective is a community-based business cycle-long entrepreneurial learning activity that engages farmer groups in the development or upgrading of their businesses through participatory processes, and by interacting with other value chain actors as they get exposed to the dynamics in supply and market chains.

The VCS implementation framework

The VCS implementation framework is crucial and should be discussed and clearly defined during the overall planning of VCS. The **ARIAS VCS Core Team** will be in charge to coordinate, supervise, monitor, and mentor the implementation of the VCS. The day-to-day implementation of VCS will be led and oversight provided by different facilitators. A crucial role will be played by the **district-level mentor-facilitator (MF)** and **block-level facilitator (BF)**. They will have a good understanding of marketing, and value chain and product development, as well as outstanding capacity to work closely with farmers and will be committed to the communities. The **community facilitator (CF)** will be a progressive member of the farmers' group enrolled in VCS and is expected to have skills, or high potential to acquire these, in facilitating the group process.

The BF and CF will jointly facilitate VCS sessions of one farmer group only. The MF will facilitate all sessions of VCS implemented in the relevant district. Therefore, for successful implementation of VCS, **all three facilitators are expected to jointly and collaboratively facilitate all sessions**. The MF will also be responsible for regularly submitting monitoring reports (e.g. checklists) to the ARIAS Core Team who will establish and maintain a VCS status database, access to which will be granted to CIP staff. Selection and/or hiring of staff by ARIAS will be informed by the recommendations provided by CIP in the draft term of reference.

ARIAS VCS Core Team and VCS facilitators will undergo about a week's TOF on VCS. Upon completion of the training the monitoring-mentoring framework will be finalized and terms of reference for the different facilitators will be refined, accordingly.

Facilitation, monitoring and mentoring

VCS Core Team and VCS facilitators will all perform facilitating, monitoring, and mentoring functions. However, they will have well defined and different responsibilities in the process. Facilitators should clearly understand the monitoring-mentoring function as part of the facilitation process. Accordingly, the VCS training has specific sessions on facilitation and VCS monitoring. The roles of the facilitators should be made clear during the TOF-VCS to ensure that they perform the monitoring-mentoring function well enough to achieve the objectives and comply with ARIAS requirements.

It has been said that: "Facilitation is the practice of providing leadership without taking the reins. A facilitator for community engagement gets others to take responsibility and to take the lead on different tasks that will result in collaborative efforts to address the issue around which the engagement is taking place"¹. Therefore, the different facilitators are trained so that they can learn how to use methods and tools that enable the VCS group to understand the vision and purpose of its engagement, the means to achieve its objectives and targets, and ways of tracking whether the group and its members are progressing well towards the final goal of initiating or strengthening a business. Facilitators need to balance time, the degree of uncertainty around key issues, and the maturity and

¹ Pennsylvania State University. *Center for Economic and Community Development. Dept of Agri Economics, Sociology, and Education. "Facilitating Community Engagement". College of Agricultural Sciences.* <https://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/engagement-toolbox/facilitation>. Accessed 03/13/2019

strength of the VCS group, and help the members to find the best possible option or action to address the challenge or opportunity. Facilitation for entrepreneurship and value chain development requires a set of skills that teases out the participants' existing and potential skills to listen, motivate, and develop the different capabilities to teach, mentor, and manage learning processes.

If facilitation is the means of getting the processes done without imposition, then monitoring tracks and assesses their accomplishment. If outputs in terms of process and/or concrete compliance indicators are not, or only partly met, or there are other needs/gaps to be addressed to achieve outputs, facilitators should mentor the VCS group themselves, or facilitate access to external specialists, technicians, business service providers, and others to provide the required mentoring to the VCS group.

Summary of modules

MODULES	SESSIONS/ACTIVITIES	DURATION
<i>M0. VCS Preparations</i>	VCS refresher course by APART facilitators Village immersion (i.e. focus sites) and legitimization with local officials (district and village) Preparatory meetings with prospective participants	2-3 days
<i>M1. VCS Planning and targeting</i>	VCS orientation; rules of engagement, responsibilities Participant selection, profiling Preparation of monitoring folder/portfolio Prioritization and targeting Curriculum adaptation/ refinement	4-6 hours (held on separate days)
<i>M2. Group formation and strengthening; assessment and strengthening for enterprise development</i>	2a. Identification, validation of business/enterprise; capability assessment of members	2-3 hours
	2b. Livelihood and business visioning; objectives setting	
	2c. Learning to work together: - Improving communication skills, cooperation and trust building - Facilitation skills	2-4 hours (maybe done longer in separate sessions if group needs more strengthening)
<i>M3. Introducing business and marketing concepts</i>	3a. The business enterprise and the value chain perspective; Planning the market visit	3 hours
	3b. Mapping the supply and market chains; identifying chain actors; Field work – market visit Discussion/organizing outputs; sharing	 2-3 hours 4 hours
<i>M4. Identifying and prioritizing chain</i>	4a. Planning for in-depth value chain assessment	3 hours
	4b. Conducting chain assessment (i.e. interviews, focus group discussions with various chain actors)	Separate days; sub-groups

MODULES	SESSIONS/ACTIVITIES	DURATION
<i>opportunities and interventions</i>	4c. Analyzing and prioritizing chain opportunities, interventions, and potential support services needs	4 hours
	4d. Sharing and validating with chain actors and potential business support services providers; stakeholders' validation workshop 1 (SVW1); output-preliminary action plan	4-6 hours
<i>M5. Testing innovations</i>	5a. Action planning for innovations to address opportunities and interventions; preliminary action plan from SVW1 validated with members	2 hours
	5b. Designing and organizing the testing of innovations	2 hours (if multiple innovations then more time)
	5c. Conducting and monitoring the testing of innovations; consumer and market testing	4-8 hours
	5d. Special topics to support innovation, examples: production and postharvest interventions – root and tuber crop opportunities; social marketing; food quality and safety; packaging, etc. as identified	16 hours (several weeks/sessions; maybe done in cluster of enterprise groups)
	5e. Analyzing results and preparing to share innovations	4 hours
	5f. Sharing innovations with chain actors and other farmers SVW (product introduction and exhibit with improved packaging)	4-6 hours
<i>M6. Accessing business development services (BDS)</i>	6a. Panel discussion of invited BDS providers	2.5 hours
	6b. Synthesis of BDS; accessing during VCS implementation	0.5 hours
<i>M7. Business Planning</i>	7a. Business planning lecture	1 hour
	The preparation of the business plan for the enterprise group usually requires technical assistance from BDS provider and/or APART staff	
<i>VCS enterprise launch: the final event</i>	Planning of the business launch (BL): 2 months before the projected date of the launch	At the start or middle part of M5
	Launching new businesses/ enterprises:	
	Preparation of exhibits and business pitch	2 hours– pre-BL
	Final event; business launch	8 hours
<i>Post-VCS support</i>	Post-BL; planning for post-VCS support	4 hours
	Monitoring of businesses, support services and external business environment	
	Managing business challenges and opportunities	
	Facilitating the preparation of business plans and access to BDS or technical assistance	

The modules in brief

Module 0

VCS preparations

This facilitator-led module involves:

1. An immersion process in order to:
 - a) clarify with the participating agencies and farmer group(s) the VCS process
 - b) identify the members who will commit to VCS sessions right through until the business launch.
2. The conduct of the VCS refresher course by the APART facilitators for the local facilitators, especially to include the use of the VCS Learning Guide and the VCS Monitoring Guide.

Expected outputs:

- 1) Capability of local facilitators to conduct VCS enhanced
- 2) The use of VCS manual, learning guide, and monitoring guide clarified and understood
- 3) Supplies and materials, logistics, and templates for documented outputs understood and prepared
- 4) Refresher course conducted by APART facilitators.

Before module 1, APART will have oriented and consulted the local units and farmer group on the VCS process, the participant selection process, and their involvement/needed commitment in the VCS. This may be through consultation meetings or through consultative visits to the relevant local offices and farmers; these are activities that can be done in the 'village immersion' by APART facilitators.

There is need to assess which farmer groups are eligible or potential VCS participants using the following criteria: (1) organized and with high enough potentials to engage in business enterprise; (2) strong interest; (3) good potential of improving the supply chain (i.e. needed raw materials and other inputs).

The VCS refresher course, if necessary, should be run for local facilitators during this stage.

The facilitators should make ready the VCS documentation portfolio which is where the VCS documents are kept (e.g. adapted curriculum, profile sheets, pre-test results, module session outputs, etc.). This VCS portfolio is useful in the VCS monitoring-mentoring process.

Module 1

VCS planning and targeting

This module involves:

1. orientation of selected and committed VCS participants and getting to know the members
2. profiling of the VCS members
3. prioritization or validation of the targeted enterprise
4. validation of the adapted VCS curriculum, scheduling, and logistics agreements.

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. discuss the concept and process of the VCS
2. confirm their interest and commitment to participate in the VCS
3. validate the VCS enterprise using the APART enterprise prioritization process
4. refine the VCS curriculum according to their needs and backgrounds.

Duration: 4 hours

Learning content and methods:

Content / Activity	Methods
1. Getting to know each other	Games to help improve communication, participation/cooperation and trust/respect building
2. Profiling of participants and group using template set out in the manual (<i>demographic/socio-economic/educational background of individual participants; existing livelihoods of members</i>)	Group interaction followed by facilitator's brief summary of getting to know games to build core values of communication/ cooperation and trust/ respect
3. Leveling of expectations and commitment to participate in the process	Meta cards (training materials used to write thoughts/key words in small papers), expectations wall
4. Introduction/orientation of the VCS	Presentation, discussion
5. Pre-testing of participant knowledge	Use of simple questionnaire (1 page)
6. Validation/prioritization of the focused commodity, enterprise or value chain *	Use of ranking criteria for 2-3 potential commodity candidate enterprises
7. Refining the VCS curriculum	Presentation, discussion, matrix ranking, meta cards
8. Norm setting/functions and roles of participants/facilitators/resource persons	Small group discussions, presentation, consensus building exercise, line game
9. Logistical agreements: venue, scheduling, resources needed,	Discussion-interaction; firming of agreements

* This step is not needed if the commodity is already chosen (i.e. in APART it is potato).

NOTE: The profile sheets of participants and their participation in this module should give the facilitators some ideas/insights as to the resources and capabilities of members, which facilitators should note in their documentation. Activities 4, 7, and 8 may not take much time as these are partly discussed in Module 0.

Expected outputs:

1. participants and facilitators reach common understanding of the VCS approach
2. VCS enterprise group formed and members profiled
3. VCS curriculum validated; develop the VCS sessions plan and schedules for implementation
4. logistical needs clarified and agreed (e.g. venue, funds, supplies/materials).

Module 2

Group formation and strengthening for enterprise development

This module aims to assess, form, and strengthen the involved people's organizations (POs) for enterprise development or chain improvement. It has three sessions: (1) group formation for enterprise operation, (2) livelihood and business visioning, and (3) learning and working together.

Session 1. Group formation for enterprise operation

Objective:

1. To validate the potential enterprise for chain development or upgrading
2. To form the VCS group based on the validated enterprise/value chain.

Duration: 1 hour

This is a brief session where the trainer-facilitator will present the identified/validated enterprise/value chain based on the preliminary assessments. The facilitator describes the possible organization/formation of the group members according to the different activities (e.g. production, processing, marketing, business recording) that will be involved for the enterprise to operate. The organizational structure of the business enterprise will then be identified.

Session 2. Livelihood and business visioning

Objectives:

At the end of the session, participants would be able to:

1. discuss key livelihood and business concepts
2. develop and share their livelihood and business vision
3. prioritize related market chain(s) of the validated/prioritized commodity(ies).

Duration: 2 hours

Learning content and methods

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Understanding livelihoods and business	Group exercise on livelihoods; meta cards
2. Enterprise/ business visioning of the farmer groups	Group discussion and livelihood visioning (i.e. household livelihoods; farmer groups livelihood)
3. Prioritizing commodity and value chains *	Brainstorming; group discussion for consensus building exercise on focused value chains

* This step is not needed if the commodity is already chosen (i.e. in APART it is potato).

The outputs will be synthesized and documented by the facilitator for review by the participants.

Session 3: Learning and working together

Objectives:

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. demonstrate the capabilities in communication and cooperation/collaboration that are essential in value chain/enterprise development
2. assess what makes a group successful, and describe the roles and contributions of its members
3. firm up core values needed for the success of the business.

Duration: 2-4 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Roles and contributions of group members	Team building games: start with exercises/games that highlight individual imaging, self-worth, self-knowledge as important building blocks to group work for business development; brainstorming, meta cards (training materials used to write thoughts/key words in small papers)
2. What makes a group successful	Team building games that highlight communication, trust building exercises

The outputs will be synthesized and documented by the facilitator for review by the participants.

SPECIAL TOPIC: Facilitation skills building

The purposes of this session are to:

- 1) stress the importance and principles of the facilitation function in the VCS process
- 2) help build/improve facilitation skills.

This session will be conducted by an invited APART resource person or the VCS facilitator.

Method: Lecture, games, role-play, video

Module 3

Introducing marketing and business concepts

This module aims to introduce key concepts on business, enterprise, market supply and value chains. It consists of two sessions: (1) market-supply and value chain perspectives, and (2) entrepreneurship for small-scale producers.

Module 3 starts with a practical discussion of the concepts and principles of market, supply and value chain, especially the differences between the three: in terms of forward and backward linkages and the importance of facilitation and collaboration of all chain actors for mutual benefits. This is session 1, which includes a market visit for an experiential learning of the concepts and principles, as well as serving as primer for module 4 on the actual value chain assessment.

Session1: Supply-market and value chain perspective

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. improve understanding of the participants on the concepts of business and enterprise, supply-market chains, and adding value
2. identify the value chain actors, potential service providers, and other stakeholders, and their roles in the value chain.

Duration: 3 hours

Learning content and methods

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Definitions (supply and market chains, marketing, value chains, and adding value)	Presentation Games, role playing Case analysis
2. Description of chain actors, service providers, stakeholders and their roles	
3. Chain mapping: Flows of products, money information; benefit distribution and power relations; bargaining power	
4. Market visit: preparation and organization	Market visit orientation; organize members in to sub-teams to interview chain actors

EXERCISE: Market visit (another day)

Duration: 2 hours, excluding travel time

The market visit is structured as guided field work set out in the manual that should introduce the market and business concepts, and chain mapping. The participants are expected to learn from the different market – supply chain actors. The members work in sub-groups to be able to conduct the most interviews and observations in the limited time (2 hours excluding travel time). It is important to have adequate preparation for the market visit. The sub-groups should chose a leader who can facilitate the planning and execution of the interviews including who is responsible for what task, clarifying the checklist of data/information to be gathered for each chain actor and by direct observation, note-taking, analyzing gathered data/information, and organizing reporting back to the group. During the interviews with a limited number of chain actors, participants should gather and record information about

other chain actors as well. Also, APART facilitators must have made prior arrangements with the appropriate agency or chain actors for the market visit.

After the interviews and direct observation in the field, participants return to the session venue for the discussion, analyzes of fieldwork outputs, organization and sharing of outputs. The market visit be scheduled at a time where most chain actors are present and accessible.

Synthesis by the facilitator. In addition to summarizing the outputs of the market visit exercise, noting the initial supply and market chain maps, the synthesis should emphasize the importance of the exercise in identifying additional supply and market chain actors, understanding how to contact and better engage them in preparation for the conduct of the full value chain assessment in module 4.

Session 2: Entrepreneurship for small-scale producers

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. discuss the concept of entrepreneurship and the role of local entrepreneurs
2. identify different types of business organizations, and describe their relative advantages and means of growth.

Duration: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Learning content and methods

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Farmer and processor: producer versus entrepreneur	Games, testimonials, panel discussion (successful entrepreneurs)
2. Income and profit orientation, improving efficiency, competitiveness through chain interventions	Case study, testimonials; example using commodity/ value chain
3. Types of business organizations, options for organizing business groups (pros and cons of cooperatives, associations, others)	Presentation, case study
4. How local entrepreneurs grow	Testimonials, case presentation; lecture

NOTE: Since this session is not long, the presentation and orientation for the Module 4 field work can follow, that is the conduct of the value chain assessment.

Module 4

Identifying and prioritizing chain opportunities and interventions

This module aims to assess and prioritize challenges and opportunities across the supply and market chains using appropriate tools. The chain mapping exercise in module 3 can provide leads to the different chain actors who will be interviewed during this module's value chain assessment.

The chain assessment results can help analyze how improvements can be made at the different points or nodes in the chain: from inputs to production, processing, marketing, and consumption, including the logistics in the different parts. It consists of five sessions: (1) planning for value chain assessment, (2) conducting the chain assessment, (3) discussion and analysis of the chain assessment results, (4) sharing and validation with chain actors, potential support services providers, and stakeholders, and (5) analyzing and prioritizing chain upgrading opportunities and interventions.

Session 1: Planning for supply-market-value chain assessment

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. understand the importance and purpose of value chain assessments
2. plan and organize chain assessments
3. present the potential interventions in the chain functions/actors based on the chain assessment results.

Duration: 3 hours

Session1, on planning and organizing for the value chain assessment, can already be done following session 2 of module 3, which is a short duration session. The assessment should focus on the relevant chain of the target commodity enterprise while also enabling a good understanding of other related chains.

Before conducting the value chain assessment, the facilitator should have prepared for the module 4 field work by contacting the chain actors who will be interviewed or involved in group discussions. This is critical as securing the cooperation of some chain actors, such as traders and businessmen, could be challenging. Therefore, the benefits of participation, such as access to fresh product, should be outlines. It is also important to legitimize this process by sending communication to the relevant officials.

The use of the checklist of data/information needs for each chain actor is very useful. The checklist from module 3 can be refined and tailored to the specific enterprise value chain.

Learning content and methods

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Target commodity/supply-market chain/service providers and stakeholders to visit/interview	Group discussion; brainstorming, meta cards Follow through of chain map in module 3
2. Key information to be collected, methodology to use, and questions for each actor/service provider	Checklist provided Group exercise; role-playing (practice interview)
3. Tasks and roles for assessment team members	Group discussions; allocation of tasks within the farmers group
4. Preparing logistics and schedule for fieldwork	Group discussions; post session contacts

Session 2: Conducting the value chain assessment

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. apply methods and tools in supply-market chain assessment
2. collect relevant information for assessing the target commodity chains
3. determine operational challenges in conducting the assessment.

Duration: 2-4 hours (may vary according to the chain actor interview or group discussion). Fieldwork is done in sub-groups and could take 2-5 days depending on the availability of producers, traders, processors, and other chain actors.

Learning content and methods

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Chain actor (e.g. input supplier, farmer, trader, wholesaler, retailer, processors, consumer) characterization, including gender roles	Field visit, key informant interviews, focus group discussion (FGD), direct observation of production, markets, processing
2. Basic chain description (volumes, prices, margins, seasonality), relationships, governance, risks/vulnerabilities, costs and margins, including issues of efficiency, equity and sustainability	Field visit, direct observation, interviews, FGD Expanded, in-depth rapid market appraisal
3. Problems and opportunities; potential interventions/innovations	Field visit, interviews, FGD

Session 3: Discussion and analyses of fieldwork results

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. consolidate, process and analyze data from the assessment
2. discuss and summarize key results, conclusions, and recommendations for action.

Duration: 4 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Data consolidation and processing	Group exercise
2. Analyzing fieldwork data results, using quantitative and qualitative/visual tools	Analytical methods and tools, including chain mapping and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC)
3. Preparing the assessment report	Group exercise; consolidation of findings

NOTE: Basic chain maps include the functions/roles of actors, their characterization and relationships; risks and vulnerabilities; costs and margins; challenges and opportunities. The value chain fieldwork should be able to capture the data/information of the different chain actors.

Session 4: Sharing and validating with value chain actors

Objectives:

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. share and validate assessment results with other chain actors and stakeholders
2. jointly identify and prioritize chain opportunities, including potential collaboration with chain actors.

Duration: 3-4 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Presentation of assessment results	Presentation, display of products and posters
2. Discussion with other actors and stakeholders to solicit their views and suggestions	Panel discussion, group exercises
3. Building chain-wide consensus on priority needs and opportunities, and next steps	Panel discussion, group exercises

NOTE: This sharing of value chain assessment results is called the stakeholders' validation workshop, the participants for which include facilitators with farmer group leader or representative, partners and stakeholders, and potential BDS providers. Sessions 4 and 5 of this module can be done together during the stakeholders' validation workshop (SVM).

Session 5: Analyzing and prioritizing value chain opportunities

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. build consensus on an updated list of priority market opportunities, using outputs from the sharing-validation exercise, with other chain actors and stakeholders
2. prepare an action plan to address the prioritized market opportunities.

Duration: 2-3 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Identifying criteria and guidelines for priority setting	Brainstorming
2. Ranking of supply-market chain opportunities by farmer-processors, partners, and chain representatives	Ranking exercise and group discussion
3. Building consensus on priority market opportunities	Group discussion

NOTE: The stakeholders' validation workshop will have as its final output an action plan that addresses the identified challenges and opportunities to develop or upgrade the value chain. The workshop can be carried out for clusters of enterprise groups and held in a strategic venue where relevant stakeholders and potential BDS providers converge. Workshop participants include representatives and facilitators of the enterprise groups. The action plan that will be developed will therefore still have to be presented to and validated by all members of the enterprise group back in the community.

Module 5

Applying innovations for supply-market or value chain development

This module aims to introduce technological, commercial, and institutional innovations or interventions in collaboration with other chain actors and stakeholders to address identified opportunities and/or challenges. It consists of six sessions: (1) validating the action plan of innovations to address market opportunities, (2) designing and organizing the testing of innovations/interventions, (3) conducting and monitoring the testing of innovations, (4) special topics to support innovations, (5) analyzing results and preparing to share innovations, and (6) presenting and sharing innovations with chain actors, support providers, and other stakeholders.

Sessions 1 and 2 can be done together in one sitting.

Session 1: Validating the action plan of innovations to address market opportunities

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. validate the identified/prioritized innovations corresponding to value chain opportunities and challenges with the enterprise farmer group members
2. develop the design and organize for the testing of innovations/interventions.

Duration: 2 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Validating the technological, commercial, and institutional innovations identified during the SVW	Presentation of the action plan Group discussion
2. Prioritizing potential innovations for testing and introduction in market chain	Group discussion, group exercise
3. Refining the action plan	Group exercise

Session 2: Designing and organizing the testing of innovations

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. identify the needed interventions to develop or improve the value chain, and translate them into a design for testing
2. organize and prepare for testing interventions/innovations, including roles/task assignments, guidelines, and tools to be used.

Duration: 2 hours (if group decides on multiple innovations then will need more time)

Learning content and methods

LEARNING CONTENT	METHOD/TOOLS
1. Moving from the identification of innovations to design of activity plan	Group exercise
2. Preparing for activities to test innovations, defining roles of members and allocating tasks from production to marketing, and identifying sources of support services and/or specialists/resource persons needed to test the innovations/interventions	Group discussion
3. Preparing guidelines and tools for testing prototype innovations: commercial, technical and social/cultural feasibility	Group exercise

Session 3: Conducting and monitoring the testing of innovations or interventions

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. develop prototypes or improve the target interventions.
2. undertake testing and refinement of interventions
3. monitor the process and results of innovation testing.

Duration: several weekly sessions based on the design and organization for the testing of innovations.

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Implementing activities for testing the prototypes/drafts	Experiments/trials, market research, consumer and market testing, focus group discussions
2. Collecting and organizing information during testing; assessing for quality or efficiency standards	Recordkeeping and other documentation methods; quality assessment tools; consumer or user feedbacking
3. Modify action plan or adjust activities accordingly	Group work, discussion-sharing

NOTE: Refer closely to the VCS Monitoring Guide. Resource persons or specialists should be accessed/invited to train and guide the specific interventions. There will be different resource persons depending upon the intervention.

Session 4: Special topics to support innovation

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to use practical knowledge, information, and skills in applying interventions or innovations to the market chain.

Duration: Around 16 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS (EXAMPLES)- AS APPLICABLE	METHODS
1. Business laws and regulations	Resource persons or specialists Lecture, presentations, field visits, group discussions, group exercises, learning visits/educational trip
2. Product standards and certification	
3. Supply chain management	
4. Good manufacturing practice (GMP) and food safety/ hygiene	
5. Packaging and labeling	
6. Market development and marketing strategies, including social marketing	

TOPICS (EXAMPLES)- AS APPLICABLE	METHODS
7. Business ethics	
8. Negotiation and conflict management	
9. Accessing and using market information	
10. Legal services	
11. Other topics depending on the needs of the group concerned	

NOTE: The conduct of seminars or trainings for the special topics may be clustered for common needs.

Session 5: Analyzing results and preparing for sharing innovations

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. analyze and use results in further refining innovations
2. prepare for sharing innovations with other stakeholders.

Duration: 4 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPIC	METHODS
Summarizing experiences and results	Presentation, group discussion
Reviewing innovations based on previously agreed indicators of success, profitability	Group exercise; costs and margins analysis
Developing a shortlist of field-tested innovations; producing the product package for presentation to stakeholders for feedback	Group discussion; interventions, and product(s) packaging
Preparing for the SVW with exhibition of initial innovations results	Group exercise for planning; task allocation
Others as needed	

NOTE: Session 5 can already start in the middle of module 5 to prepare enough for the SVW. The presentation of improved products and innovations is done in the 2nd SVW with exhibition, Session 6.

Session 6: Presenting and sharing innovations with market chain actors and stakeholders

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. share tested innovations or interventions with other chain actors and stakeholders
2. get feedback and suggestions for further improvements or refinements from potential markets and other stakeholders.

Duration: 6 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
Sharing event: Building chain-wide consensus on priority innovations as basis for business development	SVW with exhibition of product prototypes, or improved products, and other innovations; display of sample products and posters
Presentation of field-tested innovations	Presentation, testimonials, promotional activities, media coverage
Discussion with other actors and stakeholders to solicit feedback and suggestions	Panel discussion, group exercises, feedback forms
Post-event assessment and planning for further improvements/ refinements	Group discussion planning facilitation

NOTE: Session 6 is the 2nd SVW where tested innovations/ interventions are presented to and shared with partners, stakeholders, BDS providers, and representatives from potential markets, with media coverage if possible. The main purpose is to get feedback for further refinements or improvements to prepare for the final event, the business launch.

Post-module 5: Planning for the final event

The final event, the business launch, should be planned about two months ahead of the target date. This is the responsibility of the APART management with the different levels of facilitators. Planning should start immediately after completion of module 5.

After the SVW, when the revised action plan has been developed, a suitable date should be identified for the business launch. Then preparations can be adequately be undertaken, including the refinements of the product quality with improve packaging, etc.

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. plan for the business launch
2. prepare and organize the business-launching event.

Duration: 4 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Reviewing status of innovations to estimate readiness, and scheduling of the final event	Group discussion
2. Conceptualizing and designing the business launch	Group discussion; video presentations of sample business launches; sample programs
3. Roles and tasks for farmer-group members	Group exercise
4. Logistic planning	Administrative work/ facilitation

Module 6

Accessing Business Development Support Services

This module aims to inform participants what BDS are available, the ways and means of accessing them, and develop or enhance farmers' access to and use of BDS. The module consists of three sessions: (1) BDS services, (2) financial resources and management services, and (3) research and extension support.

Engagement with BDS can already be initiated during module 5 where resource persons or specialists, and support service providers are needed to implement the planned interventions or innovations across the chain.

A panel discussion of BDS providers should be organized as a cluster activity involving all the VCS enterprises.

Panel Discussion:

A panel discussion consists of invited representatives of potential BDS providers relevant to the VCS group enterprises. Each panelist (e.g. experts in the relevant technologies, marketing, packaging, food safety, financing, entrepreneurship skills training) presents the support service that they provide, the process used and how to access them in 10-15 minutes. An open forum follows for clarification and more information.

The following sessions may be adjusted in the actual implementation, as per need.

Session 1: Business development services

Objectives:

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. identify sources of BDS to help develop the enterprise and the corresponding business plan
2. prepare proposals for accessing financial resources.

Duration: 2 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. BDS: ways and means of access and support	Presentation, group discussion
2. Type and availability of sources for financing	Presentation, group discussion
3. Procedure, guidelines and conditions in applying for external financial assistance	Group discussion, group exercise

Session 2: Financial management services (this can also be part of the special topics, and done simultaneously in module 5)

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. apply practical knowledge and skills in financial management
2. identify and access services for financial management support.

Duration: 4 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Financial literacy; business instruments	Presentation, visuals, samples
2. Practical record/bookkeeping, accounting and reporting	Presentation, group exercise
3. Management services and capacity building support	Presentation

Session 3: Research and extension support**Objectives**

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. determine needs for research and extension support in implementing business plans
2. identify and contact service providers of relevant research and extension support.

Duration: hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Research and extension support to farmer-group business: needs and opportunities	Presentation, panel discussion, group discussion
2. Introduction to service providers of research and extension support	Presentation, panel discussion, group discussion

Module 7

Business planning

This module aims to help the enterprise groups develop business plans to make use of market opportunities. The business plan is prepared by building on realistic data/information covered during the process of applying and testing of innovations, as well as data/information gathered from modules 3 and 4. It consists of two sessions: (1) review of the value chain assessment outputs and feedback on innovations; and (2) assistance to developing the business plan of the enterprise group.

Session 1: Review of value chain assessment outputs and feedback to innovations

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. review the chain assessment results
2. analyze the financial information related to innovations for incorporation into the business plan.

Duration: 2 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Review the value chain assessment results	Resource person; group discussion
2. Review feedback from consumers, other chain actors, and stakeholders to refine innovations	Technical assistance; mentoring
3. Shortlisting of commercially viable innovations for business planning	SWOC analysis, group exercise, financials

Session 2: Preparing the business plan of the enterprise group

Objectives

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. know the parts and process of preparing business plans
2. identify further needs to enable them to prepare their business plan

Duration: 6 hours (with assignment)

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Procedure and guidelines in business planning	Presentation, group discussion, sample business plans from VCS
2. Preparing the business plan (according to APART agreed template)	Group exercise; technical assistance/resource person, mentoring

Final VCS event, the business launch

This event marks the completion of the VCS with the launching of new business/es by the farmer-processor group. This is usually a three-day activity consisting of: (1) preparations; (2) the business launch proper; and (3) evaluation and preparation for post-VCS support.

Objectives

At the end of this event, participants should be able to:

1. showcase the businesses and innovations resulting from the VCS
2. share experiences and outcomes of their VCS participation
3. establish and strengthen contacts with other market chain actors and stakeholders.

Duration: 4 hours

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS	METHODS
1. Business launch activity design: before, during and after the launch	Presentation, videos
2. Presentation of VCS derived businesses and innovations	Testimonials, promotional activities, display of sample products and posters, business pitch, media coverage
3. Review and evaluation of VCS experiences and outcomes	Presentation, testimonial, panel discussion, use of evaluation/feedback sheets
4. Establishing and strengthening chain-wide contacts	Preparing and distributing a directory of chain-wide actors and stakeholders

Post-VCS support

After the VCS, the post-VCS plan should be discussed and mapped out for each enterprise. This means follow-up activities are identified and organized to provide support services to continue the improvements of the initiated enterprises. Necessary BDS and ways of accessing them are also identified. The outputs of the post-business launch session should be noted as these are important inputs to the post-VCS support plan.

Objectives

During the post-VCS support phase, participants should be able to:

1. monitor business performance and manage continuing challenges and opportunities
2. prepare and implement longer-term business plans.

Duration: To be determined

Learning content and methods:

TOPICS (EXAMPLES)	METHODS
1. Monitoring of businesses, support services and external business environment	VCS groups' monitoring and consultation meetings Linking activities with BDS Seminar series on special topics Mentoring/coaching
2. Managing business challenges and opportunities	
3. Facilitating implementation of long-term business plans	

VCS Monitoring-Mentoring Toolkit

In order to achieve the objectives of the VCS, timely and adequate monitoring of VCS implementation is vital. The purpose of VCS monitoring is to check whether the planned activities and related exercises are conducted and achieve the expected outputs in terms of both quality and quantity. Since the VCS is a complex process entailing both the strengthening of business capabilities and the upgrading of value chains or enterprises, it should be expected that needs, challenges and opportunities arise during the process. Facilitators should be adequately equipped to have the technical knowledge and skills to address them through mentoring. Facilitators are themselves mentors but, whenever needed, they should also facilitate identifying and accessing external resource persons with specific knowledge and skills. Mentoring needs are often identified in the monitoring process.

In order to guide the process, a VCS Monitoring-Mentoring Toolkit is provided. It consists of the VCS monitoring-mentoring guide, and the VCS monitoring checklist.

The **VCS monitoring-mentoring guide** (VCS-MMG) is directly used by the VCS community facilitator, (CF) and block facilitator (BF). It is suggested that the VCS-MMG is reviewed before the start of each session as a quick and easy reminder. The VCS-MMG serves as the summary of activities, exercises, and expected outputs of each session. This should take into account any revisions or modifications that have been agreed by the VCS group during the VCS curriculum validation in module 1.

The district level Mentoring Facilitator (MF) and the ARIAS VCS Core Team should also have a copy of the VCS-MMG as a reference document for their monitoring and mentoring. Despite having different oversight and monitoring roles, they should refer to this document to harmonize status, technical and service assistance needs of the group, and the nature and timing of their responses. The VCS-MMG should help identify areas or special topics for mentoring like marketing, financial literacy, food safety and quality, packaging, certification, and others. VCS groups with similar needs that are near each other can be clustered for greater efficiency in accessing required services and resource persons. Other events to be harmonized and clustered are the SVWs after module 4 (i.e. to share value chain assessment outputs for action planning), and module 5 (i.e. presentation of improved products and feedback from BDS providers).

The **VCS monitoring checklist** (VCS-MC) is a handy tool that helps to check the progress of VCS implementation per session; whether the session has accomplished the target activity(ies) and achieved expected output(s). It also helps identify specific needs and problems to be addressed. The ARIAS Core Team and VCS facilitators have diverse and complementing roles in using the checklist. The VCS-Facilitators should complete the checklist immediately after the completion of the relevant session to ensure compliance and, if required, implement immediate corrective measures, including timely identification of needed technical assistance, information and business services.

A key difference between VCS-MMG and VCS-MC is that in the former the expected outputs are indicated in terms of activity process; in the latter, in terms of concrete documentation to be produced and kept in the document portfolio that each VCS group is expected to have (kept either by the CF or BF).

Monitoring-mentoring guide

Modules	Sessions/Activities	VCS Team	Week	Duration (No. of hours/session)	Expected Output(s)	Monitoring-Mentoring Particulars*
M0. VCS Preparations	Village immersion Legitimization with district/village officials VCS orientation VCS refresher Selection of VCS participants	VCS Core team/ facilitators	W0	2-3 days	VCS legitimized VCS orientation done to farmer groups in general & local partners Participants selected	
M1. VCS Planning and targeting	1.1. Preparatory meetings with prospective participants	Community facilitators, CFs, MFs	W1	4	Participants selected; 100% commitment assured Participants get to know each other well Curriculum understood; refined as needed Pre-testing done; results kept for evaluation Session venue & time decided; logistics agreed	May take more than 1 day within W1 CFs must see that the VCS process & requirements for VCS participants are clearly understood
	1.2 Targeting and selection of value chains based on criteria drawn from the APART guideline	CFs, MFs	W2	4	Profiling done and kept in CF's portfolio Commodity focus enterprise validated using exercise that considers climate resilience and gender sensitivity	This process considers the APART prioritization process Facilitators prepare get-to-know exercises Portfolio organized for record keeping and documentation. See that all session

Modules	Sessions/Activities	VCS Team	Week	Duration (No. of hours/session)	Expected Output(s)	Monitoring-Mentoring Particulars*
						records/docs, outputs, observation, attachments are kept separately for each module
M2. Group formation and strengthening	2.1 Livelihood and business goals and objectives setting	CFs, MFs	W3	4	Enterprise vision clearly defined by the VCS group; refined and written on the wall	Vision statement record kept by CF/MF Process documentation
	2.2 Individual and group capacity assessment	CFs, MFs			Skills and capabilities of members assessed; as in VCS guide	Exercise output(s) kept CF/MF own observation/ sketch on record Core team facilitators visit after W3 to check on the livelihood vision, and the preparations for the module 3, especially the market visit
	2.3 Learning and working together	CFs, MFs	W4	4	Enterprise Group members' collaboration, cooperation, communication skills improved	Session exercises record kept including facilitators' observations
M3. Introducing of marketing and business concepts	3.1 Supply-Market chain perspective	CFs, MFs, Core Team, CIP-FS+	W5	3	Participants understood chain actors and their roles (market and supply chain perspective), and importance of such mind-set (not just self/own-function thinking) in business/ enterprise success Group is oriented/organized to conduct the market field visit	Before W5 (after W3), Core Team facilitators check that the local CFs /MFs prepare the guide for the market visit

Modules	Sessions/Activities	VCS Team	Week	Duration (No. of hours/session)	Expected Output(s)	Monitoring-Mentoring Particulars*
			W6	3, morning 4, late morning/afternoon (upon return)	Actual market visit conducted Findings/results of the market visit discussed, analyzed, and presented by members	W5 and W6 activities should be clearly understood by the group; clear instruction/agreement during the Core Team facilitators visit All presentations are kept Bullet summary of market visit outputs (based on the guide) prepared and reviewed by Core Team facilitators
	3.2 Entrepreneurship and business for small-scale producers	CFs, MFs	W7	0.5	Participants clearly understand entrepreneurship versus ordinary business concept; risks understood	Facilitators use and simple exercises to clearly explain the concepts, tools, and means of risk adaptation/mitigation
	M4. Identifying and prioritizing market opportunities	CFs, MFs, Core Team	W7	3	Participants understand value chain assessment; the progression step from module 3 The outputs of module 3 revisited to identify chain actors Organize and plan the field work/interviews, FGDs, etc. Discuss the Checklist/ Guide for the value chain assessment	Facilitators take time to guide the participants in identifying all possible chain actors involved in the target livelihood/enterprise Facilitators contact the identified chain actor informants (i.e. individuals or groups), and schedule the interviews Facilitators check that logistics are in place

Modules	Sessions/Activities	VCS Team	Week	Duration (No. of hours/session)	Expected Output(s)	Monitoring-Mentoring Particulars*
	4.2 Conducting chain assessment	CF, MFs	W9	4 (plus travel time) in sub-groups; within the week based on the actors' time	The interviews and FGDs, market inventory, etc. are conducted as planned Done in subgroups	All activities may be done within the week. The facilitators guide them especially in the contacts of traders, businessmen who may be difficult to engage
	4.3 Discussion and analysis of assessment results with risk mitigation measures of livelihoods	CFs, MFs	W10	4	The findings/results are organized as shown in the guide; done in subgroups of 2-3 members Members guided to assess chain actors as to chain map, characteristics, resources, constraints/ challenges, opportunities	Facilitators prepare bulleted yet substantial summary of the findings per chain actors as to: chain mapping; characterization of chain actors; resources, constraints and opportunities per chain node Reviewed by Core Team/CIP-FS+ facilitators.
	4.4 Sharing and validating results with value chain actors, including tools for priority setting with climate change/mitigation measures and gender issues	CFs, MFs, Core Team, CIP-FS+	W11	4	Farmer groups presentations in clustered workshop i.e. by commodity or area	Facilitators organize these clustered workshops and invite resource persons who can provide input to address the challenges and opportunities presented; ideas for interventions per actor
M5. Targeting and testing potential innovations	5.1 Action planning for innovations to address chain challenges and opportunities	CFs, MFs, Core Team, CIP-FS+			Action plan prepared based on the value chain assessment findings, and discussions during the validation workshop	Facilitators should be able to guide the group in the detailing of the action plan; linking and accessing to required

Modules	Sessions/Activities	VCS Team	Week	Duration (No. of hours/session)	Expected Output(s)	Monitoring-Mentoring Particulars*
	5.2 Designing and organizing the testing of innovations	CFs, MFs, Core Team	W12	3-4	Design: Detailed activity, scheduling, tasking, and resources needed identified	technologies/ innovations for each chain actor/function, as needed
	5.3 Conducting and monitoring the testing of innovations	CFs, MFs, Core Team	W13- W22	3-4 per session (as agreed, depending on interventions)	Members implement the identified innovations from input supply, production, processing (if applicable) to utilization and marketing	Facilitators closely monitor the activities; conduct mentoring if capable; or link/access BDS for mentoring of different innovations needed
	5.4 Special topics to support innovations (e.g. business regulations, business ethics, collective marketing)	CFs, MFs, Core Team, CIP-FS+	W16- W22	Depends on topics identified (interphase with 5.3 based on availability of resource person)	Training-workshops/seminars conducted per farmer groups or in clusters (for common special topic) Conducted cross-cutting livelihood development training-workshops (e.g. financial literacy, marketing, business regulations, etc.)	Core Team facilitators should check special topics are common so these can be done in clusters to facilitate the contact of specialists/ experts
	5.5 Analyzing results and preparing for sharing of innovations	CFs, MFs, Core Team	W23- W25	4	Completed chain innovations and prepared to present them in a stakeholders' validation workshop Send invitations to BDS for the SVW	Facilitators guide the group as to the preparations, especially on product quality, packaging, labeling, etc., and the organization of the SVW All local facilitators cooperate with the Core Team facilitators who are the main organizers of the SVW

Modules	Sessions/Activities	VCS Team	Week	Duration (No. of hours/session)	Expected Output(s)	Monitoring-Mentoring Particulars*
	5.6 Presenting and sharing of innovations with key market chain actors and farmers	CFs, MFs, Core Team, CIP-FS+	W26	6-8	Conducted the SVW; first presentation/ promotions of innovations/improved products with packaging, labeling	The program organized for exhibits, sharing of experience, getting feedback from BDS and potential markets Feedback to further refine the products for improvements to be ready for the business launch
M6. Accessing business support services	6.1 Funding resources, financial management services	CFs, MFs, Core Team	W27	4	BDS providers in a cluster Panel discussion/forum of enterprise groups	Core Team facilitators organize this panel of BDS providers; send the invitations
	6.2 Research and extension support (including marketing), others identified	CFs, MFs, Core Team	W28	4	Enterprise groups introduced to the different BDS and their specific needs Contact persons, numbers and addresses given to the groups	Facilitators link the PO to identified BDS
M7. Business planning	7.1 Introduction to business planning	CFs, MFs, Core Team	W29- W34	Continuous	Business plan approved validated and checked for improvements based on module 4-module 5 data/ information outputs/results	Core Team facilitates the technical assistance needed to prepare/ finalize the Business Plan
	7.2 Developing and customizing business plans	CFs, MFs, Core Team				
Final event; the business launch	Launching of new businesses: 3-day affair	CFs, MFs, Core Team, CIP-FS+	W32	8	The businesses are launched at a big event organized to jumpstart promotions of much improved products: from quality to presentation/ packaging; even branding	The business launch should be prepared at least 2 months in advance: the venue, program, invitations, especially products preparations

Modules	Sessions/Activities	VCS Team	Week	Duration (No. of hours/session)	Expected Output(s)	Monitoring-Mentoring Particulars*
						The post-BL evaluation includes a post-BL action plan, detailing activities to be done especially post-VCS support, e.g. sustainability, marketing, etc.
Post-VCS support	1. Monitoring of business, support services and external business environment	CFs, MFs, Core Team, CIP-FS+	Post-W32	Variable	Further BDS support identified and accessed; followed up	Coordination of enterprise/value chain development can contribute continued support, especially marketing business plans, marketing while also scaling up with other enterprises
	2. Managing business challenges and opportunities				Continuing strengthening trainings for the groups programmed and conducted for the groups	
	3. Facilitating implementation of long- term business plans					
	4. Continuing capacity development of project implementers					

- Weekly session records, outputs, observation, and process documentation are important for monitoring and basis for mentoring. There should be a lead facilitator (either the CF or BF) to keep the VCS group documentation portfolio. This will be inspected and reviewed during monitoring visits.
- The VCS group documentation portfolio includes evidence, such as attendance sheets, photos, visuals, etc., are organized by module.
- All sessions should have photographic records.

Monitoring checklist

What it is and who uses it. The VCS monitoring checklist (VCS-MC) is a handy tool that helps check the progress of VCS implementation per session; whether the session has accomplished the target activity(ies) and achieved expected output(s). It also helps identify specific needs and problems to be addressed. The ARIAS Core Team and VCS facilitators have diverse and complementing roles in using the checklist.

The community facilitator (CF) and the block facilitator (BF) should complete the checklist immediately after the completion of the relevant session. It is their role to assess whether activities and outputs are adequately achieved, suggesting means or tools for improvement if needed. **Both CF and BF should have their own copy of the VCS-MC the content of which should correspond** and serve as a ready reference during monitoring visits by **the district-level mentor facilitator (MF) or the ARIAS VCS Core Team member, who have the overall monitoring responsibility.** **The BF submits copy of the completed checklist to the MF** as required by ARIAS management. Importantly the BF should raise with the MF in a timely manner any needs for mentoring, or supplies and materials needed for the effective implementation of activities or sessions.

The MF can refer to the VCS Core Team as needed. The VCS Core Team is in charge of coordination, monitoring, and mentoring the implementation of the VCS. It consistently interacts with CIP staff to address needs, gaps, and/or opportunities to strengthen the VCS process and mentoring. **The MF submits copies of the monitoring checklist to the VCS Core Team, as required by management and on a monthly basis as a minimum.** Based on this information and regular field visit, the **VCS Core Team will establish and maintain a VCS status database whose access is granted to CIP staff.**

The CF and the BF prepares and keeps the VCS documentation portfolio, which includes all output materials, documents, photos, etc. per session. These will be inspected together with the VCS-MC during monitoring visits. The whole documentation portfolio will be submitted to the VCS Core Team after the completion of the VCS.

How to use. The monitoring checklist is organized per VCS session. Each session has a set of activities, exercises, and expected outputs. At the end of each session (that may require more than one meeting), CF and BF should complete their own forms (yellow headers only) by marking (/) when indicated activities were conducted, and outputs available. All the outputs should have supporting evidence, which should be kept in the VCS document portfolio. During the monitoring visits, the MF looks at the checklist and the documentation portfolio of the VCS group and marks (/) whenever they could verify that the activities and outputs were successfully completed (blue headers). A similar approach is expected to be followed by the ARIAS Core Team (green header), in addition to the ones reported by CF and BF, they will also check specific outputs to be produced by the MF. Grey cells indicate that no output is expected from the activity. Finally, the remarks column is available for facilitators to indicate activities and/or outputs not done, incomplete, or replaced; needs and gaps; areas for mentoring; or any other concern.

Session	Session Conducted (with attendance list)	Activity	Exercise	Activity/ Exercise conducted	Expected output	Output available	Output checked by mentor facilitator	Expected output by mentor facilitator	Output by mentor facilitator available	Checked by Core Team	Remarks
1.1. Preparatory meetings with prospective women and men participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Orientation to VCS	1. Lecture-discussion using slides	<input type="checkbox"/>							
		2. VCS planning	2. Value chain case presentation (video)	<input type="checkbox"/>							
			3. Definition of roles and responsibilities for facilitators and participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	List of roles and responsibilities (or photographic evidence)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	
			4. Profiling of participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	Profile sheets of committed participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidated list of participants with key characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			5. Division by group	<input type="checkbox"/>							
			6. Checking expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidated list of expectations of participants (or photographic evidence)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
			7. Formulating house rules	<input type="checkbox"/>	List of house rules (or photographic evidence)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
			8. Pre-testing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Filled pre-testing forms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

1.2. Targeting and selection of commodity for value chain development with climate change and gender dimensions	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Identification selection criteria	1. Generate criteria for VCS enterprise selection through focus group discussions and key informant interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	List of prioritized options and agreed identified target commodity (ies)	Gender map	Target commodity (ies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		2. Option ranking	1. Rank options by criteria for VCS enterprise selection	<input type="checkbox"/>							<input type="checkbox"/>
		3. Gender considerations in commodity selection	1. Gender mapping	<input type="checkbox"/>							<input type="checkbox"/>
2.1. Livelihood and business visioning	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Small group workshop on livelihood portfolio of group	1. Visioning	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vision/goal of FBS group on target commodity enterprise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		2. Presentation on livelihoods, farm and agriculture-based business									
		3. Formulating a group or individual mission and vision									
2.2. Individual and group capacity assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Brainstorming to assess and identify existing business capacities and resources of women and men farmers	1. Capacity and asset inventory for target business	<input type="checkbox"/>	List of skills, capabilities and resources available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			2. Individual entrepreneurial competency assessment								

4.3. Discussion and analysis of assessment results with risk-proofing of livelihoods	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Evaluation and consolidation of results on market chain assessment exercise		<input type="checkbox"/>	Detailed VC map incl. description of actors, summary of key market information by actor, opportunities/products to be targeted by FBS enterprise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Target opportunities and products	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.4. Sharing and validating results with market chain actors	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Validation meeting with chain actors and stakeholders		<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence of validated VCA results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidated results for further checking & ready referral to needed support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.1. Action planning for innovations to address market opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Lecture on identifying and prioritizing innovations	1. Video presentation with group discussion	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence of planning exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
5.2. Designing and organizing the testing of innovations	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Group discussion to identify specific actions and roles	1. Business hooray	<input type="checkbox"/>	Action plan of interventions for VC development/upgrading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidate action plan for experts' consultation & referral to needed support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3. Conducting and monitoring the testing of innovations	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Discussion of results of tested innovations	1. Tower building 2. Breakthrough 3. Trust walk, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence of exercises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
			4. Testing/try outs of interventions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence of testing/notes/results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidation of testing/tryouts for needed support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

				5. Consumer/ market testing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Compilation/ photographic evidence of testing results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidate results of consumer/mar ket testing for experts referral	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5.4. Special topics to support innovations	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Identifying special topics to be covered	1. Invite resource persons	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence of highlights/summa ry/ recommendations ; copy of presentations (if any)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidation of recommendation s for support service referral(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5.5. Analyzing results and preparing for the sharing of innovations	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Finalizing the results for the session “presenting and sharing of innovations with key market chain actors and farmers”		<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence of results and plan for stakeholders validation workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Finalized plan for stakeholders validation workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5.6. Presentation and sharing of innovations with key market chain actors and farmers	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Stakeholders’ validation meeting		<input type="checkbox"/>	Program, photographic evidence and compiled outputs of stakeholders validation workshop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consolidation of SVW outputs for BDS referral/ support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6.1. Introduction to business planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Presentation and discussion on “business planning”	1. Potato went to town	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence of activity results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6.2. Developing and customizing business plans (with climate change and gender dimensions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Actual writing of business plan		<input type="checkbox"/>	Draft business plan of target enterprise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reviewed draft business plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

6.3. Critiquing and improving business plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Presentation and critiquing of business plans	1. Business café	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improved Business Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
7.1. Financial resources	<input type="checkbox"/>		1. Meeting with relevant support services providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence; list of potential financial support needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	List of financial needs; referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.2. Financial management services	<input type="checkbox"/>		1. Meeting with relevant support services providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
7.3. Research and extension support	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	List of potential business support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
7.4. Legal services	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	List of legal services needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
VCS final event	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Business launch of VCS enterprises	1. Business pitch	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
			2. Product display	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
			3. Market encounter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
			4. Dream up	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographic evidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

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CIP is a research-for-development organization with a focus on potato, sweetpotato and Andean roots and tubers. It delivers innovative science-based solutions to enhance access to affordable nutritious food, foster inclusive sustainable business and employment growth, and drive the climate resilience of root and tuber agri-food systems. Headquartered in Lima, Peru, CIP has a research presence in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

www.cipotato.org

CIP is a CGIAR research center

CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food-secure future. Its science is carried out by 15 research centers in close collaboration with hundreds of partners across the globe.

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